



### **The Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant (MIOCRG) Program**

In 1998, the California State Sheriffs' Association and Mental Health Association co-sponsored Senate Bill 1485 (Rosenthal), establishing the Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant Program. The grants supported the implementation and evaluation of locally developed demonstration projects designed to curb recidivism among persons with mental illness.

The MIOCRG Program recognized that cooperation between law enforcement, corrections, mental health and other agencies was key to improving California's response to mentally ill offenders. The MIOCRG Program also recognized that one size doesn't fit all in crime prevention efforts. Projects were collaborative and addressed locally identified gaps in jail and community-based services for persons with a serious mental illness.

SB 1485 required counties to form Strategy Committees comprised of the sheriff or department of corrections director; chief probation officer; county mental health director; a superior court judge; representatives of local law enforcement agencies and mental health provider organizations; and a client from a mental health treatment facility.

The Strategy Committee was responsible for developing a local plan that described the county's existing responses to mentally ill offenders, its identified service gaps, and its proposed strategies for addressing the mental health treatment and other needs of mentally ill offenders released from custody. An Executive Steering Committee – comprised of state and local corrections and mental health officials – provided recommendations on the content, format and requirements of grant applications. In awarding grants, SB 1485 directed the California Board of Corrections to consider, at a minimum, the following criteria:

- percentage of the jail population with severe mental illness;
- demonstrated ability to administer the program, and to provide treatment and stability for persons with severe mental illness;
- demonstrated history of maximizing federal, state, local and private funding sources; and
- likelihood that the program will continue after state funding ends.

In 2006, Juvenile Justice grants were added to the program. Funding for MIOCRG Programs was eliminated in the Budget Act of 08-09, during a global recession when the state faced a \$42 billion budget deficit.

## **What are Mental Health Courts? <sup>1</sup>**

California implemented its first mental health courts in 1999, with grant funding from the Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant (MIOCRG) program.

Mental health courts combine judicial supervision with community mental health treatment and other support services to reduce criminality and improve the quality of life of participants.

### Mental health courts are established to:

- Make more effective use of limited criminal justice and mental health resources
- Connect individuals to treatment and other social services in the community
- Improve outcomes for offenders with mental illness in the criminal justice system
- Respond to public safety concerns
- Address jail overcrowding and the disproportionate number of people with mental illness in the criminal justice system.

### Common Elements in Mental Health Courts

- Participation in a mental health court is voluntary. The defendant must consent to participation before being placed in the program.
- Each jurisdiction accepts only persons with demonstrable mental illnesses to which their involvement in the criminal justice system can be attributed.
- The key objective of a mental health court is to either prevent the jailing of offenders with mental illness by diverting them to appropriate community services or to significantly reduce time spent incarcerated.
- Public safety is a high priority, and offenders with mental illness are carefully screened for appropriate inclusion in the program.
- Early intervention is essential, with screening and referral occurring as soon as possible after arrest.
- A multidisciplinary team approach is used, with the involvement of justice system representatives, mental health providers, and other support systems.
- Intensive case management includes supervision of participants, with a focus on accountability and monitoring of each participant's performance.
- The judge oversees the treatment and supervision process and facilitates collaboration among mental health court team members.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: The Judicial Branch of California